United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly decides that Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) should apply for membership and not participate in its work.

+ Debate in General Assembly continues with addresses by Presidents of Armenia, El Salvador, Head of State of Sierra Leone and Head of Government and Foreign Minister of Liechtenstein; statements by Foreign Ministers of France, China, Germany, Belarus, Mexico; Assembly last night heard statements by Poland, Sweden, Chile, Portugal and Gabon.

+ Angela King, Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa arrives in Johannesburg to assume her duties as head of 50-member team which will coordinate peace efforts in that country.

+ Bosnian President and Croatian President to jointly request abrogation of arms embargo imposed by Security Council.

+ Troop-contributing countries to United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus say they are unable to delay planned reductions of contingents to allow for conclusion of next round of political talks.

+ Preparatory Committee for 1993 World Conference on Human Rights concludes third session in Geneva without agreement on draft provisional agenda for Conference.

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The General Assembly has decided that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) cannot continue automatically the membership of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations. By a vote of 127 in favour to 6 against (Kenya, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Yugoslavia, Zambia and Zimbabwe), with 26 abstentions, the Assembly decided last night that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must apply for membership in the Organization and not participate in the work of the Assembly.

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Milan Panic, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, addressing the Assembly last night, formally requested membership of the United Nations on behalf of "the new Yugoslavia". He said he was sure that his country and his Government could meet the conditions for membership and stressed that support from the United Nations to his country at this time would further the cause of peace. Rejection would impede it, he added.

A number of speakers questioned the resolution's legal basis, stating that it bypassed the Charter, set a dangerous precedent and posed a threat to ongoing peace negotiations.

Introducing the 45-power text, the representative of the United Kingdom said the Assembly would be acting upon the recommendation of the Security Council and thus following the procedure laid down in the United Nations Charter for membership questions.

The action last night marks the first time the General Assembly has voted to remove a Member State from its seat in the Assembly. South Africa was suspended from the General Assembly in 1974.

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Opening the General Assembly debate this morning, President Levon Ter-Petrossian of Armenia, said his country was going through the democratization of its institutions and the reforms of its economy in an environment dominated by blockades, high unemployment, a declining standard of living and an acute energy crisis. At the same time, Armenia was compelled to devote a significant portion of its resources to undertake reconstruction efforts following the 1988 earthquake.

Democracy and independence had played a fundamental role in the development of Armenia's foreign policy, Mr. Ter-Petrossian said. His country had recently signed bilateral agreements with two of its neighbors, Georgia and Iran, while undertaking discussions with Turkey on the normalization of their relations.

Reiterating that Armenia had no territorial claims against Azerbaijan, he said his Government stood ready to bring its constructive participation toward a dialogue with that country. He pointed out, however, that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh could not be reduced to an ethnic minority, nor could it be denied the right to self-determination. It was time that their protection be secured through permanent international guarantees.

El Salvador's President, Alfredo Cristiani acknowledged that, while significant progress towards peace in his country had been made, there were still technical, logistical, financial and political difficulties. With the support of the United Nations, however, his country was now in a position to conclude the crucial stages of the peace agreement, in particular the cessation of armed confrontation by 31 October, he said.

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Describing the peace agreement as "sound and convincing to the Salvadoran people and the entire world, because it empowers and expands democracy", Mr. Cristiani said his country would like to move to another important stage of this process, where free political activity would determine conditions in all areas of his country's life.

The role and function of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) were in keeping with the new dimensions of the role to be played by the United Nations in the post Cold War period, the Salvadoran President said. Mr Cristiani also called on the most economically powerful nations to renew their commitment to contribute to the costly process of peace in his country. "El Salvador does not want to deprive itself of the great opportunity provided by peace", he said.

Peace through peace-keeping operations, peace through economic and social development and peace through international cooperation were emphasized by Roland Dumas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, in his statement to the Assembly.

The French Foreign Minister pointed out that there were cases where the international community must intervene even though the cease-fire was neither complete nor lasting. Having become the leading participant in peace-keeping forces with some 6,000 men under the United Nations flag, Mr. Dumas went on to say, France was aware of the need to define, for specific situations, emergency measures for sending a warning and providing protection. He announced that the French Government would make available to the United Nations, at any time, a contingent of 1,000 men for peace-keeping operations. He expressed the hope that others would follow this example.

The French Minister also emphasized the importance of strengthening the cooperation between regional organizations in the face of the increasing number of conflicts, and proposed that the members of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) adopt a code of conduct which would encompass and define the norms governing collective security.

Turning to the issue of social and economic development, Mr. Dumas launched an appeal to member States to devote at least 0.7 per cent of their respective Gross National Product to official development assistance, pointing out that his country had doubled the amount of its financing to the World Environment Fund and had contributed to the establishment of a 20-billion-franc program agreed upon by the European community.

The State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Mr. Qian Qichen, told the Assembly that a new international order should be based on the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. All countries should have the right to choose a social system and a road to development suited to their actual conditions. Countries should respect each other, treat each other as equals and resolve their disputes through peaceful negotiations. Only when the countries undertake to observe those principles can there be genuine democracy in international relations, he said.

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He pointed out that China had long stood for the complete prohibiton and thorough destruction of all weapons of mass destruction. Pending the realization of that goal, he said, it was necessary to take, as a transitional step, appropriate measures to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, Mr. Qian Qichen expressed opposition to attempts to "interfere in and obstruct normal cooperation between sovereign States under the pretext of preventing the proliferation of arms," and he strongly condemned selling large amounts of advanced weapons and equipment to "grossly interfere in another country's internal affairs".

The Chinese Foreign Minister stressed that for the people of developing countries, the right to subsistence and the right to development were undoubtedly "the fundamental and most important human rights of all". It was one-sided and harmful "to make irresponsible comments about the human rights situation in developing countries in disregard of the difference in historical background and cultural tradition, as well as the actual conditions in these countries", he said.

In his statement, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Klaus Kinkel, said his country's contribution to international stability would continue to focus on peace-making -- through economic cooperation, protection of human rights, humanitarian aid, and international measures - to protect the environment. But the constitutional basis must also be established so that Germany could be enabled to make armed forces available to the United Nations for peace-keeping and peace-making assignments. He added that, while his Government would not take the initiative, Germany would also seek a permanent seat in the Security Council if a change in the Council's composition was actually considered.

Turning to recent incidents concerning refugees in Germany, Mr. Kinkel pointed out that Germany, of all the European countries, had taken in the largest number of asylum-seekers -- some 400,000 -- and 220,000 refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In view of the high level of unemployment and the shortage of housing, especially in the eastern part of the country, the influx of refugees had placed an exceptional burden on the population, he said. The German Minister emphasized however that he was not trying to tone down the problem. The hatred demonstrated and the terror perpetrated by a radical minority against asylum-seekers was a disgrace, he said.

Looking to his country's future since it established statehood last year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Pyotr Kravchanka, told the Assembly that much of its foreign policy programme priorities had been realized. Nuclear tactical weapons had been withdrawn from its territory and Belarus had made a commitment to withdraw strategic weapons during a 7-year period. In the political sphere, he said, Belarus would continue to act in accordance with the constitutional principles of a neutral and non-nuclear state. The country also hoped to adopt a new Constitution making the process of democratization irreversible.

Mr. Kravchanka expressed dissatisfaction with the "almost complete inactivity of the United Nations in the implementation of General Assembly

resolutions on strengthening, implementing and mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster". Belarus was a victim of the largest nuclear disaster in human history, he said, noting that even the small secretariat established to organize the implementation of the resolution was "silently observing the situation from Vienna".

In his address to the Assembly, the Head of State of Sierra Leone, Valentine E.M. Strasser, appealed to the United Nations for its economic, military and diplomatic support to eliminate the campaign of "terror and destabilization" of the whole region undertaken by outside forces as a result of a total breakdown of law and order in Liberia. Sierra Leone had provided a base for the peace-keeping force of the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia and because of that the country had been the object of a "premeditated and unwarranted invasion" by armed groups from Liberia.

While the external factors contributing to the decline in the economical conditions could not be denied, Sierra Leone also suffered from the "incompetence and malpractices of the previous governmenmt which left the nation to drift without direction", President Strasser said. He reiterated his Government's intention to implement the swift reconstruction process of the country and pledged Sierra Leone's commitment to the rule of law and to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Fernando Solana told the Assembly that the best preventive diplomacy was one in which programmes in support of development were an essential element.

Recalling that the richest fifth of the world's population accounted for 83 per cent of the total income, while the poorest fifth had to make do with 1.4 per cent of that income, he said that the unprecedented increase in migrations to the more prosperous countries was one of the global impact of these inequalities. He then stressed Mexico's promotion of expanding markets, and the need for flows of goods and services to grow without artificial barriers of a political or economic nature Without protectionist barriers, the developing countries could earn around $44 billion more from exports, he said.

Mr. Solana went on to say that too much attention to the so-called new global issues was paid at the expense of development problems, combating extreme poverty and strengthening international co-operation. He therefore called on the Assembly to increase the efficiency of the organs responsible for economic and social activities, including the Economic and Social Council and the second and third committees of the Assembly.

The Head of Government and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, Hans Brunhart, announced his Government's intention to invite each Government and observer group represented in the General Assembly to nominate an independent expert to attend a meeting of experts in Liechtenstein next March. That meeting would be convened to further develop ideas on the principle of self-determination advanced by Liechtenstein's Head of State, Prince Hans-Adam II, during his address to the General Assembly last year.

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Mr. Brunhart recalled the concerns expressed by Prince Hans-Adam II on the need to find ways of promoting peaceful solutions to many conflicts rooted in tensions between communities and States, within the framework of the principle of self-determination. While acknowledging United Nations' commitment to that principle, he asserted that its practical and peaceful application had often been lacking.

Liechtenstein had undertaken extensive consultations on that question with a number of delegations, he told the Assembly, urging that the world body take steps to make the right tooelf-determination more effective and by doing so contribute to the avoidance of some future conflicts.

In his statement to the Assembly yesterday, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, said his country, as a contributor of military contingents to the United Nations peace-keeping forces around the world, recognized the urgent need of reassessment of the tasks and structure of this type of operations, including the establishment of a standing force at the disposal of the Organization. Another subject that deserved examination was the financing of the peace-keeping operations out of defence budgets of States, he said.

Addressing the issue of human rights, the Polish Foreign Minister noted that the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights should elaborate an action-oriented programme for the promotion and implementation of human rights as well as for the prevention of their violations. There was no justification for any differentiation in understanding the contents and the meaning of human rights, he said. Nor was there any room for their selective application.

Mr. Skubiszewski also expressed concern at a possible division based on the level of economic development in Europe, and called for a reform of the international economic relations which would take into account the urgent needs in that area of the Central and Eastern European nations.

The Foreign Minister of Sweden, Margaretha Af Ugglas, praised the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), calling it a "welcome development" whose central task was to support the Eastern European countries in their transition and to help the new States find forms of peaceful coexistence. She pledged last night to work for the "further enhancement of its capacity to build peace and settle conflicts", when Sweden assumes the chairmanship of the CSCE Council of Ministers in December.

On the environment, Mrs. Af Ugglas said industrial and developing countries must work together in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity to deal with threats to our environment and achieve environmentally sound development.

The Swedish Foreign Minister also welcomed the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda For Peace", noting that in an earlier document the Nordic countries had discussed several of the proposals presented in the report. In that document called "Shaping the Peace" - the United Nations in the 1990's", the Nordic countries had appealed for the strengthening of the capacity of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to undertake preventive diplomacy.

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The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Mr. Enrique Silva Cimma yesterday recalled that his country has traditionally placed at the service of the United Nations the professional experience of its armed forces in the Middle East, the Asian subcontinent, Kuwait, and Cambodia, adding that Chile was prepared to increase its cooperation with the United Nations in the future, should that prove necessary.

Pointing out that his country was now growing at an annual rate of 7 per cent, had reduced inflation to 13 per cent a year and unemployment to around 5 per cent, he said that the benefits for his country would be significantly greater if the ground rules of the international economy were more equitable.

In spite of the structural and logistical difficulties, no matter the outcome of the upcoming elections, the Angolan people would find the road towards a pluralistic and tolerant society, Joao De Deus Pinheiro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, told the Assembly last night.

Regarding Mozambique, Mr. Pinheiro said his Government had welcomed the recent meeting between President Chissano and Afonso Dhlakama, President of the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO). Mutual trust and open dialogue would continue to irreversebly advance the Mozambique peace process, in which the United Nations should play a preponderant role, he said.

The Portuguese Foreign Minister also stated that it was necessary "once more" to alert the international community to the situation in East Timor -- "a Non-Self-Governing Territory under Portuguese authority illegally occupied by Indonesia in violation of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter". Portugal, he said, in its capacity as administering Power recognized by the United Nations, called for a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution, with full respect for the legitimate interests of the East Timorese people, including the right to self-determination.

Pacaline Mferri Bongo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon, urged the international community not to allow African countries to be trapped in the continuing spiral of economic recession and debt. The serious financial difficulties facing most African countries were in fact caused by problems in an unstable international monetary system. The fall in commodity prices had especially hurt African countries, most of which had begun economic reform programmes, she said.

She urged the international community to undertake a series of actions to aid African countries, such as the stabilization of the prices of non-petroleum commodities, a reform of the international monetary system, and increased overseas development assistance. The future of international solidarity, and of the world, would depend on such efforts to improve the human conditions.

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Press Release DH/1232
23 September 1992

Angela King, Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) arrived today in Johannesburg to assume her duties as head of the 50-member observer mission which will be deployed to coordinate peace efforts in that country.

According to a United Nations spokesman today, a group of six military observers travelled with Mrs. King, bringing the number of observers already in South Africa to 20. The full contingent of observers is expected to be deployed in October.

The Security Council authorized on 17 August the Secretary-General to deploy, as a matter of urgency, United Nations observers in South Africa to address effectively the areas of concern, in coordination with the structures set up under the National Peace Accord.

The Mission will coordinate its work with the National Peace Committee, the National Peace Secretariat and the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation. In addition, arrangements are being made to ensure coordination between the United Nations observer team and those of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Community and the Organization of African Unity.

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The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia have announced their intention to jointly request the abrogation of the embargo on arms exports imposed by Security Council resolution 713 and the establishment of a Joint Committee in order to coordinate defensive efforts until the aggression against them has been stopped entirely.

In an annex to the Agreement on Frienship and Cooperation between the two Republics dated 23 September, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic also contend that the past diplomatic, political and humanitarian efforts of the international community had not stopped aggression against them, nor have they substantially alleviated the suffering of civilian population.

The two Presidents urge the international community to take energetic action in protecting the two States from aggression, in accordance with Chapter 7 of the United Nations Chapter, and reiterate that the policy of protection of human rights will be promoted "persistently and consistently" in accordance with common and codified international law.

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The troop-contributing countries to United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) have proposed that military observers be deployed in Cyprus instead of infantry units in order to reduce the cost of the operation. They also agreed with a previous proposal by the Secretary-General that UNFICYP should be financed by assessed contributions and not rely on voluntary contributions.

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In his report to the Security Council, dated 21 September, the Secretary-General said contributing Governments had warned the United Nations that they were unable to delay the planned reductions of their contingents until the outcome of the next round of political talks. Negotiations between the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities took place at Headquarters in June, July and August, and are scheduled to resume again on 26 October "following a pause for reflection".

According to previous reports by the Secretary-General, UNFICYP "is facing a chronic and ever-deepening financial crisis, which imposes a most unfair burden on the troop-contributing countries". The Secretary-General has been asked by the Council to re-examine the Force's mandate and resources taking into account the realistic options available in current circumstances.

While acknowledging that a critical moment had been reached in the talks between the parties in Cyprus, the contributing countries said their patience had run out and that UNFICYP, in its present form, would shortly become unviable unless the Security Council decided to change the basis of the Force's financing.

The Secretary-General noted however in his report that the situation would not be resolved until the outcome of the next and decisive round of talks was known. If those talks proved succesful, he said, the tasks of UNFICYP might become more extensive, for a fixed period of time.

The eight countries contributing troops to UNFICYP are Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Document S/24581

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The preparatory Committe for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights concluded its third session in Geneva on 18 September without reaching agreement on a draft provisional agenda for the Conference.

Consultations largely focused on the draft agenda item which stressed the implementation of human rights standards and instruments and considered the effectiveness of the United Nations machinery. Other draft agenda items covered included: consideration of the relationship between development, democracy and the universal enjoyment of human rights and the securing of the necessary financial and other resources for United Nations activities in that field.

The Conference will take place 25 years after the 1968 International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran and in connection with the observance of the International Year for Human Rights. The Committee is due to hold its fourth session at Geneva from 22 March to 2 April 1993 - the final one - before the World Conference, scheduled to take place at Vienna from 14 to June.

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